



# **LEAGUE RULES**

**2024**

## PREAMBLE

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The name of the organization shall be the Mercer County Senior Softball League. The League shall be non-profit, whose purpose is to organize scheduled softball games for member teams. Each team in the League shall be considered a member and shall have equal rights and limitations. If any assets are at any time to be distributed, such distribution shall be equally among active members. All officers and only officers of the League shall be deemed Trustees. The League hereby indemnifies Trustees/Officers to the maximum extent against expenses and liabilities in connection with any proceeding. The intention of the League is to operate and to limit any personal liabilities of Trustees! Officers.

## ARTICLE I

### BY-LAWS

#### MEMBERSHIP/TEAMS

- A. Each player must be at least fifty (**50**) years old in the calendar year that he joins the League. If a player is found to be ineligible due to age, his team forfeits all games for which he was on the roster (current season only) and the player is ineligible for future play in the League unless reinstated by the Board. However, for the upcoming season all teams may have 1 player age 49 on the roster .The two teams that finished last in the standings for last season may also carry 1 player age 48 on their roster.
- B. Prior to April 1, any new team can be awarded membership by the League Board in unanimous agreement. New teams will be accepted as needed and will be entered into the League's at the discretion of the League Board.
- C. Team rosters with a maximum of twenty (20) players are to be submitted no later than June 1. Photocopies of players' driver's licenses and signed liability release forms must be made available by the manager upon demand .Any player officially removed from the roster is ineligible to play for any team that year.

In the event of injuries, only, new players can be substituted for roster players during the season. In order to avoid exceeding the twenty (20) regular player limit, a substitute player becomes ineligible when the injured roster player for whom he was substituted returns to active player status. Similarly, an injured player may not return to active playing status until his substituted counterpart player is removed from eligibility.

- D. If a player wants to play for another team , he can request a release from his manager . If the manager agrees the player can play for any team he chooses . If the manager chooses not to release the player he must complete the season with his present team . The following season that player will be considered a free agent and can play with any team he chooses . This rule has been enacted to prevent a team from gaining an unfair competitive edge over the other teams.

## ARTICLE II

### OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

The League Executive Board will be comprised of members, each with specific responsibilities. The Board will be charged with all League administrative decisions and duties, including determining League Rule revisions and additions. The League Board will decide all appeals, grievances and protests lodged before the season . The Rules Committee will decide all issues raised during the season.

## ARTICLE III

### NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

At the annual managers meeting will be governed by the following:

#### A, Nominations

1. Any designated team can make a nomination representative.
2. Only one nomination or second will be accepted from any designated team representative for each Board position.

#### B. Elections

1. Requirements for voting. Each team has one vote to be cast by the designated team representative.
2. Any candidate shall be elected when the balloting yields a majority of the votes cast.

## ARTICLE IV

### YEARLY OBLIGATIONS

The League budget will be discussed at the annual managers meeting and team dues for the upcoming season will be determined . The dues covers field fees , softball purchases and insurance coverage which the League will supply to the teams , and umpire fees . The Teams must pay their dues by June 1 st . Teams in arrears are subject to forfeit all games while in arrears .

## ARTICLE V

### RULES OF PLAY

The League shall adhere to the current ASA rules and regulations for all playing matters, except as provided in the League rules of play. League rules take precedence over ASA rules.

Before the start of each softball season, the League Board will review and decide on playing rules that shall be in the best interest of the League. The Board shall also adopt a schedule for the regular season. Subsequent suggested revisions to individual regular season game dates, times, and fields may be made with the approval of the Executive Board .

The current League rules of play are as follows:

1. Team field strength will be a maximum of ten (10) players and a minimum of eight (8).
2. Before the start of or during a game, an opposing manager may require a player to provide proper identification to confirm his roster eligibility. If a manager has reason to believe that an opponent's team includes (an) ineligible player(s), he may play the game under protest, with a subsequent investigation and ruling to be made by the League Board.
3. A game will be forfeited if a team cannot field a minimum of eight (8) players fifteen (15) minutes after the pre-arranged starting time or during play. If both teams cannot field eight men, then both teams forfeit the game.
4. There will be round robin batting (i.e., everyone bats, whether or not playing in the field).
5. There are no rules governing individual playing time in the field; however, team Managers should make every effort to give sufficient playing time to all players who desire it. Player complaints about inadequate playing time in the field will be addressed to and ruled on by the League Board. *(A likely ruling would be specifying a minimum required playing time for such players in future games.)*
6. Re-entry is permitted, a starting player can return to his original spot in the batting order only he cannot re-enter in a different spot in the order or as a replacement for another starting player. The player who substituted for the starting player is now out of the game and cannot return. The manager must notify the umpire and the other manager when a player re-enters. However, if another player is injured and cannot finish, the substitute player can replace the injured player if there is no other substitute.
7. Base runners may not leave base until a pitched ball crosses home plate.

8. Pinch runners are allowed freely with one exception, any one player may be used as a pinch runner no more than one time per inning. A player becomes the courtesy runner when he touches the base. He is out if he is on base when it's his turn to bat. He cannot be replaced by another runner.
9. If a player is removed from the game, an automatic out will be recorded (only) for the removed players next scheduled turn at bat. (No additional outs will be recorded for subsequent scheduled turns at bat). Before the start of the game, players planning to leave a game before its conclusion must inform the umpire and opposing manager of their intended departure time; no penalty will then be imposed. Note that the team is still subject to forfeiture of the game if it is unable to field eight (8) players as a result of (a) player(s) leaving or having been removed from the game.
10. This is a lob pitch league with a minimum arc of six (6) feet and a maximum arc of twelve (12) feet above the ground.
11. The pitcher's box shall be two (2) feet wide and four (4) feet deep. The pitcher can pitch from any spot in the box, as long as he has one foot in the box. The pivot foot must remain in the pitcher's box throughout the delivery. Consistent with current regulations, the pitcher must pause at least one (1) second before the start of delivery i.e. be cannot run up while in the box.
12. A strike zone mat will be used in all League games. The mat shall constitute the strike zone.
13. If the umpire calls a pitch illegal and the batter swings, the ball is in play. If the pitch is taken, it is an automatic called Ball.
14. A third strike foul (i.e., a foul hit when the count is already strike two) is an automatic out. If such a third strike foul out is caught by a fielder, the ball is in play and runners may attempt to advance at their own discretion.
15. All base paths are sixty-five (65) feet between bases and the pitching rubber is fifty (50) feet from home plate except where otherwise agreed due to field limitations.
16. A commitment line will be designated halfway between third base and home.
17. No base stealing, bunting or slap hitting are allowed.
18. All games will be seven (7) innings. Five (5) innings must be completed (4-1/2 if the home team is winning) for a game to be official.
19. The five (5) run cap rule has been instituted .This allows the team to score a limit of 5 runs in an inning . The last open inning remains and allows for catching up.

20. For inter-division games , a 5 run “head start” has been implemented for the Division II teams . A 5 run lead will be applied at the start of the game against a Division I opponent.

21. The flip/flop rule has been eliminated . Instead a cap has been placed on the open inning allowing the visiting team to go up to a total of 15 runs. The home team will then get a chance to bat.

22. Mercy Rule: a game is officially over if one team leads the other by fifteen (15) runs after five (5) innings of play have been completed (or 4-1/2 innings if the home team is in the lead).

A 10 run mercy rule will be in effect for any make-up doubleheaders against the same team.

23. All bats must be slow-pitch officially approved by ASA. Bats with altered [original manufacturer] markings are prohibited. All bats must be equal to the 1.20 BPF standard. A batter using a bat prohibited by these rules will be declared out and ejected from the game.

24. Metal spikes are not allowed.

25. Sliding is permitted into all bases, including (the scoring) home plate and (the batter’s) first base. At any base and regardless of the specific circumstances of the play, a runner who does not slide must veer out of the way of an infielder in order to avoid a collision. (You cannot break up a force out, tag play or a double play by running into a fielder.) The umpire will declare (an) out(s) as appropriate if this rule is violated. If the runner runs into the fielder and, in the umpire’s judgment, it was a dangerous play, the runner will be ejected from the game and may face suspension. The player’s action will be reviewed by the League Board to determine if further disciplinary action should be taken. Any decision made by the Committee will be strictly enforced. We are a “fun” League.

26. On a play at home plate, the catcher can record an out only by touching home plate. This means that the catcher cannot tag out a numer coming home or block him from crossing the scoring plate, even if the incoming throw draws him toward the runner and/or scoring plate. Correspondingly, the runner who touches home plate or interferes with the incoming throw at home plate shall be automatically called out.

27. The Pitcher protection rule remains in effect as written .However, either manager can object to the umpire call or no call .The managers will then discuss the play and make the ultimate decision and call. The umpire will abide by the managers decision.

28. The Home team shall supply all equipment for the game including one new ball and one slightly used ball.

29. When the batter has less than 2 strikes on him and a foul tip is caught by the catcher, the height of the foul is the determining factor. If the foul tip goes over the batters head , this is ruled as a foul out and the batter is out . A foul tip not over the batters head is a foul tip and a strike but not an out .
30. A baserunner can have no physical contact with anyone from his team , while the ball is in play . If contact is made the baserunner shall be ruled out.
31. In the event of darkness on Field # 4 before becoming an official game , the game will be treated like a rainout . The game will be replayed from the start at a later date .
32. Judgment calls cannot be protested. Except for player-eligibility protests, a protest, when allowed, must be made before the next pitch and submitted in writing within two (2) days to the Board. The protest must be important to the outcome of the game and the League Executive Board will render a decision.
33. During play, **only team managers can discuss calls with the** umpire or other items pertaining to the nature of play. Managers must make this clear to their players.
34. An umpire may remove a player for verbal abuse or physical abuse. Physical abuse will result in being removed from the League for the remainder of the year.
35. A player removed from the League for physical abuse will be subject to review by the League Board regarding possible future reinstatement the following year.
36. A player removed from the game by an umpire must leave the vicinity of the ballpark, or sit in his car for the remainder of that game. Failure to do so will result in his team's forfeiture of the game. A player removed from game one can return for game two of the doubleheader.
37. End of season ties in the standings between two teams vying for first place will be decided on a " winner take all game " . All other ties will be decided by results (won/lost) of head to head play. Next tiebreaker will be runs scored in head to head play and finally the coin toss .
38. In the event of inclement weather (not addressed by Mercer Park ) , the managers will decide whether the game shall be played . If they cannot agree the umpire shall cast the deciding vote.
39. A player must participate in at least 5 regular season games , to be eligible to play for his team in the playoffs .
40. Division I teams will continue to use the "Nick Plan " . Division II playoffs will continue with the standard format . First round with single game elimination , followed by best 2 out of 3 in the final round .

41. If the umpire does not show up for a scheduled game, or leaves during the course of the game, both managers must agree on a substitute or substitutes, who can be from either or both teams (and can even play in the game when not serving as an umpire), or a spectator. Once the game begins, it cannot be terminated over dissatisfaction with the umpiring.

42. While it is preferred that all players wear uniforms, this provision shall not be mandatory.

## ARTICLE VI

### RATIFICATION

New By Laws are proposed and adopted for the League at the discretion of the League Board. If so designated by the Board, a meeting of League Managers may be called at any time to consider and adopt By Law revisions and/or additions. If such a meeting is held, ratification shall require that at least a quorum must be in attendance and at least two-thirds ( $66\frac{2}{3}$  per cent) of those present must vote for the Article I (By-Laws) in the affirmative. Changes in Article V (Rules of Play), however, require only a simple majority vote approval.